

and changes have occurred. And across the country, there has been a movement toward for-profit hospitals in various states. That has come upon the scene in Nebraska in a big way here in the last year or so. Regional West in Scottsbluff, which is the major hospital in the Panhandle, was considering becoming on the block for sale to a for-profit entity or a nonprofit entity from out of state, in order to network and prepare for the changes in managed care. So Regional West became interested in this issue which prompted the concern of Senator Matzke to look at the issue. Clarkson Hospital then worked with Columbia/HCA, which is the largest hospital chain in the country and a for-profit entity; then made an offer to Clarkson and there was a desire to merge on that front. So we had Clarkson and we had Regional West. The conflict with Clarkson resulted in a lawsuit by the Medical Center which was just decided last week, that the first right of refusal was in place for the Med Center, and we all know the evolution of that has been rapid. Clarkson has now withdrawn from that effort to be acquired by Columbia, and the issue is still in court regarding the Medical Center's ability to acquire Clarkson. Regional West has backed out of the desire to be sold, either to a for-profit or nonprofit entity. They are instead networking in the Panhandle, but that issue is always fluid. Here in Lincoln...as I pass out a little cartoon...we've got three hospitals and Columbia/HCA did make an offer on Lincoln General Hospital. That prompted a desire by Lincoln General Hospital to make a decision as to what they wanted to do. They had been in negotiation with both Bryan Hospital and St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and their decision at this time is to proceed with a merger with Bryan Hospital. So that issue is what's before us. Mergers, acquisitions, networking, all of this is happening rapidly across the state of Nebraska. The original intent of LB 1188 was to have the Attorney General and the Health Department review acquisitions and mergers, and the original bill dealt with both nonprofit to for-profit, and nonprofit to nonprofit mergers and acquisitions. The committee amendment does not...deletes the nonprofit to nonprofit merger acquisition issue. And so that's one element of the committee amendments. And we're going to go to an amendment very shortly that will supersede all this, but I just want to give you a little background on some of the issues involved. So that is...that is one change that occurs. We also do require, though, despite the fact that there would no longer be a nonprofit to nonprofit review required under the bill, it would still be required that notice be given to the Attorney